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Imagery analysis report

Salvage Activity in the Taiwan Strait China (S)

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SALVAGE ACTIVITY IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT, CHINA (S)

1. (S/D) A large floating crane, the Dalihao, and eight ships were observed at the salvage anchorage in the northern Taiwan Strait, China, at Pingtan Naval Facility South [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The vessels were involved in salvaging the wreck of the Japanese passenger/cargo ship Awa Maru. This is the culmination of a three-year effort by the Chinese to recover the ship's cargo; the open press has speculated that the cargo is precious metals worth five million dollars. The 11,000-ton Awa Maru was sunk by a US submarine in April 1945.¹

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2. (S/D) Pingtan Naval Facility South is 25 nautical miles west of the salvage site and has been used as an anchorage since salvage operations began in the spring of 1978.

3. (S/D) The Dalihao was purchased from the Japanese and delivered to the Chinese in May 1980. The 100-meter-long, self-propelled crane has a 38-meter beam and a maximum lift capacity of 2,500 tons (Figure 3).² Other ships at the anchorage included the salvage tender Hujiulao 5, a converted cargo ship; the salvage ship Hujiulao 3; the Dabing salvage barge; a Kianghu frigate; and four ocean tugs (ATAs). [REDACTED] the crane and the salvage barge had departed the anchorage, indicating that work at the salvage site was underway.

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4. (S/D) Earlier this year Chinese officials were quoted in the open press as stating that they intend to complete recovery operations by the end of the current salvage cycle in late September 1980.¹ The use of the Dalihao floating crane indicates that the Chinese are determined to achieve this goal. Although the overall success of the salvage operations is difficult to determine, news reports of the previous salvage cycles stated that some of the cargo and the remains of several crew members had been recovered during the 1978 and 1979 salvage efforts.

5. (S/D) The Dalihao is the most prominent of several salvage-related ships that the Chinese have recently acquired through foreign purchase and domestic construction. These ships reflect the high priority of the Awa Maru salvage operation and the long-term investment by the Chinese to enhance their ocean salvage capability.

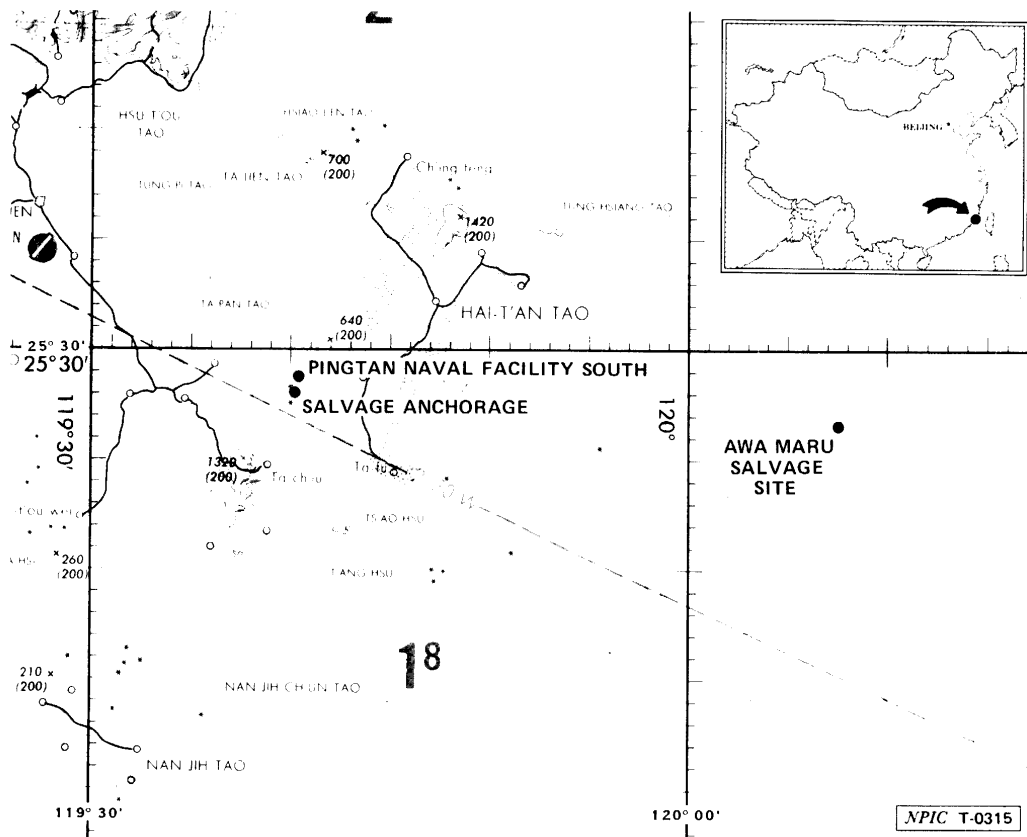


FIGURE 1. LOCATIONS OF THE SALVAGE ANCHORAGE AT PINGTAN NAVAL FACILITY SOUTH AND THE AWA MARU SALVAGE SITE, CHINA

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REFERENCES

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MAPS OR CHARTS

DMA, Tactical Pilotage Chart, Sheet H-12C, scale 1:500,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)

DOCUMENTS

1. Speer, Richard T., "Let Pass Safely the Awa Maru," US Naval Institute, *Proceedings*, Vol 100, Number 4/854, Apr 74, pp 69-76 (UNCLASSIFIED)
2. *The Motor Ship*, Vol 61, No 720, Jul 80, p 11, London, UK (UNCLASSIFIED)

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